

Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of a very special non-profit organization in my district, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), who celebrates 25 years of being the voice for abused and neglected children in Orange County.

Founded in 1985, CASA of Orange County is dedicated to providing quality intervention and advocacy services for children who are caught up in the courts and unable to safely live at home--many of whom are abused, abandoned and neglected children.

CASA of Orange County began with 15 volunteers and now has over 700 volunteers serving as mentors and advocates for child abuse victims.

In Orange County, on any given day, there are over 2,500 children and teens in foster care who have been removed from their homes due to chronic or severe abuse.

In a sea of social workers, attorneys, therapists and caregivers, it's the court appointed volunteer who is a consistent and caring friend and advocate for the child.

I want to commend CASA's volunteers and staff who are heroes to many of these children.

Thank you for your compassion and commitment to positively influencing the lives of these very special children--one child at a time.